



MEMORANDUM

June 17, 2015

TO: City of Rockville Planning Commission

FROM: Emad Elshafei, Chief of Traffic and Transportation
Kevin Belanger, Transportation Planner II

SUBJECT: *Draft Bikeway Master Plan Discussion, June 24, 2015*

Introduction

Staff is bringing the Bikeway Master Plan back to the Planning Commission to address moving the Plan forward. This memorandum will provide a brief overview of steps taken on the draft Bikeway Master Plan to date, describe the public testimony received, and outline staff's recommended edits to the draft Plan.

Background on the Draft Bikeway Master Plan

The Bikeway Master Plan was last updated in 2004 by the Department of Recreation and Parks. Since then, bikeway responsibility has shifted to the Department of Public Works, where the position of Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator was established. In 2012, the City of Rockville received a Transportation Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program Technical Assistance Grant from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to hire a consultant to collect data and provide recommendations for an update to Rockville's bicycle network. While the consultant was working, staff also convened a Bikeway Master Plan Advisory Committee, comprised of members of the Rockville Bicycle Advisory Committee, the Rockville Traffic and Transportation Commission, various City of Rockville Departments, various external agencies (including the Montgomery County Department of Transportation and the State Highway Administration), and citizen representatives.

Staff completed a draft of the Plan in February 2014 and made it available to the public. The Planning Commission first received a presentation on the draft Plan on March 12, 2014. Staff then visited with various neighborhood organizations in advance of a public hearing to review the draft Plan, and an open house was held at City Hall. A public hearing was held with the Planning Commission on April 9, 2014. As of June 12, 2015, 42 individuals and organizations have submitted testimony either at the public hearing or via mail or

email. The full testimony from these 42 individuals and organizations is provided in Attachment A. The Planning Commission voted to keep the public record open indefinitely on the draft Plan, and staff continued to attend neighborhood meetings after the public hearing for organizations that invited us to present.

The Planning Commission held a discussion after the public hearing on September 17, 2014. Staff explained the process of establishing the recommended routes and the implementation strategy involving public participation. The Planning Commission then held a work session on October 22, 2014. At the work session, staff answered several questions that the Commission had posed, including formalizing the community consultation process, explaining the missing connections in the bicycle infrastructure, and describing the demand map (“heat map”) created by our consultant to help create the recommendation route map. No specific direction on the draft Plan was provided during this work session, and no meetings were scheduled after this time due to the Commission’s busy schedule.

Summary of Public Testimony Received to Date

The Planning Commission has received testimony from 42 individuals and organizations (provided in their entirety in Attachment A). This testimony is divided into individual comments, which are catalogued and responded to in Attachment B. Many comments were repeated multiple times. Many of these comments are outlined below, in no specific order, to streamline the discussion on public testimony received on the draft Plan.

- Intersections are difficult to cross by bicycle, specifically along MD 355, the Metro tracks near Twinbrook, and Falls Road.
- A cycletrack on MD 355 would be very helpful, and it would encourage many more people to ride a bicycle. It is important to pay attention to the design of this cycletrack to not negatively impact other road users such as people riding transit.
- Bicycle lanes on Azalea Drive and Hurley Avenue should be removed from consideration in the Plan.
- The public wasn’t involved enough in the draft Plan and aren’t considered stakeholders.
- Removing car parking is unpalatable to some.
 - Note: Several Commissioners also brought up their unease with the idea of removing of car parking spaces for bikeways. As indicated previously, the draft Plan has no discussion of removing car parking for bikeways. However, at the request of the Planning Commission, staff prepared a map of all on-street bikeways proposed in the draft Plan with an overlay of current on-street parking. This map can be found in Attachment C. While there is no specific plan to implement any of the recommendations by removing car parking on one or both sides of the road in these areas, the map outlines what would need to happen to each street if the project was implemented today with current road widths and parking areas.
- Better signage is needed along popular bicycle routes, especially destination and distance signs.
- It is important for the bicycle network to be well-connected for all parts of the city.
- Aging was mentioned on both ends of the spectrum. Several comments discussed how Rockville is aging and bicycle use is not popular among older residents. Other comments described how bicycling is a great form of exercise for older residents and provides them mobility to stay in their homes.
- Bicycling is an important economic engine, and it can help low-income residents with their transportation expenses.
- Bicycling is a great form of recreation, but it isn’t a feasible mode of transportation.
- Any new off-street bicycle routes need to take street trees into account.
- The public needs to see plans for specific projects before supporting the Bikeway Master Plan.

- Millennials are not buying cars as much as older generations, and we need to plan for other modes of transportation to accommodate them.

Staff's Recommended Edits to the Draft Plan

After reading and responding to all of the public testimony, and after hearing the questions and concerns from the Planning Commission over the various discussions and work sessions that have been held, staff proposes several edits in an effort to clarify and improve the draft Plan. These edits consist of new text additions and edits, the removal of text and recommendations from the draft Plan, and typographical corrections. These edits can be found in Attachment D, and staff is prepared to discuss these with the Planning Commission.

Next Steps for the Bikeway Master Plan

Staff requests that the Planning Commission provide guidance on how to proceed with the Bikeway Master Plan. Staff recommends continuing to move forward with the draft Plan over the summer, share the recommended changes with the residents, and hold another public hearing in September, should the Commission request one. All public testimony is presented in this memorandum, as well as answers to questions from the Commission, and staff is prepared to give the Commission any additional information that is needed to make a decision on the draft Plan. The Commission also has the option to delay further discussion of the Bikeway Master Plan to coincide with the creation and adoption of the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Master Plan. Staff does not recommend this option for several reasons. First, the current Bikeway Master Plan is more than 10 years old and using bicycles as a transportation mode has evolved significantly during the last decade. The emphasis on bicycle facilities and bicyclists safety have also taken a high priority nationwide. Therefore, the City needs an updated vision on bicycling. While this draft Plan can be adopted in the next few months, the updated Comprehensive Master Plan is several years from being adopted. Second, staff has spent significant amount of resources, including a grant from COG, researching and preparing this draft as well as gathering and responding to the input from Rockville residents. Delaying the adoption of this plan would require allocating new resources to revise, update, and propose a new plan. Finally, the Bikeway Master Plan has been a stand-alone document, not associated with the Comprehensive Master Plan, and therefore, it does not need to pass in coordination with the Transportation Element.

City staff continues to remain available to give a presentation on the draft Plan to any neighborhood groups who would like to become more informed to provide their testimony and may contact Kevin Belanger, City of Rockville Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, at 240-314-8509 or kbelanger@rockvillemd.gov.

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